

# **Miami-Dade Public Library System Community Telephone Survey**

**Key Findings and Strategic Recommendations**

**January 17, 2014**

# SURVEY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Study was developed to determine public library awareness, service utilization, Internet usage, public attitudes toward the library system and potential response to property tax increases among persons who use the public library system (or who have members of their household who use the library) and those who do not.
- Telephone survey conducted with 601 registered voter heads of household over 21, in English, Spanish and Creole (according to language preferences of respondent), balanced across all Commission districts to ensure full-county representation.
- Random households were interviewed in three sample groups (householders under 55 with children, householders under 55 without children, households over 55), without reference to library use.
- Households were ethnicity balanced across the County: 64% Hispanic, 15% non-Hispanic white, 17% non-Hispanic Black / Haitian, 4% other/refused. Households weighted by gender and ethnicity to adjust for sampling error.
- Statistical margin of error for 600 cases is  $\pm 4\%$  at the 95% confidence level.

# PROFILE OF USERS AND NON-USERS

- **37% of households are “adult-only user households”**, i.e. households in which one or more adults (but no children) visited a local public library at least once within past 12 months.
  - 24% White non-Hispanic, 23% Black, non-Hispanic, 53% Hispanic
  - 49% with BA or above education, 19% over \$75,000 annual household income
  - 74% are familiar or extremely familiar with M-DPLS
- **25% of households are “children user households”**, i.e. households in which one or more children visited a local public library at least once within past 12 months.
  - 27% White non-Hispanic, 20% Black, non-Hispanic, 54% Hispanic
  - Disproportionately young head of household: 81% under 50 (vs. 30% for adult-only user households and 37% for non-user households)
  - 60% with BA or above education, 42% over \$75,000 annual household income
  - 71% are familiar or extremely familiar with M-DPLS
- **38% of households are “non-user households”**, i.e. households in which nobody – adult or child – visited a local public library within past year.
  - 16% White non-Hispanic, 17% Black, non-Hispanic, 67% Hispanic
  - 31% with BA or above education, 12% over \$75,000 annual household income

**TABLE 1**  
**ETHNIC AND INCOME CHARACTERISTICS OF**  
**M-DPLS USERS AND NON-USERS**

	<b>All M-D HH</b>	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Adult-Only User HHs</b>	<b>Child User HHs</b>	<b>Non-user HHs</b>
<b>ETHNICITY</b>					
Hispanic	59%	53%	53%	54%	67%
White, Non-Hisp.	21%	25%	24%	27%	16%
Black, Non-Hisp.	20%	22%	23%	20%	17%
<b>INCOME</b>					
Under \$35,000	32%	29%	32%	24%	38%
\$35 - \$74,900	23%	21%	23%	18%	27%
\$75,000 or more	22%	28%	19%	42%	12%
Refused	23%	22%	26%	16%	23%

**TABLE 1**  
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**M-DPLS USERS AND NON-USERS**

	<b>All M-D HH</b>	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Adult-Only User HHs</b>	<b>Child User HHs</b>	<b>Non-user HHs</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
H.S. or less	24%	18%	19%	16%	36%
Some college/AA	31%	29%	32%	25%	34%
Bachelor's/Graduate	45%	54%	49%	60%	31%
<b>M-DPLS FAMILIARITY</b>					
Extremely familiar	28%	41%	40%	42%	7%
Familiar	26%	32%	34%	29%	17%
Slightly familiar	21%	21%	21%	20%	22%
Not at all familiar	25%	7%	6%	8%	54%
<b>% USE THE INTERNET</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>69%</b>

TABLE 2A  
LIBRARY UTILIZATION BY ADULT-ONLY USER AND CHILD USER  
HOUSEHOLDS

	All User HHs	Adult-Only User HHs	Child User HHs
<b>FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY VISITS</b>			
Daily/Once a week	26%	25%	28%
Once a month	31%	28%	37%
Less than once a month	43%	47%	35%
<b>MOST IMPORTANT REASONS FOR USING M-DPLS (multiple responses)</b>			
Borrow books/DVDs/other hard copy materials	84%	78%	93%
Quiet place to sit, read, study or play	46%	46%	47%
Download e-books, music, or audio-books	24%	21%	28%
Access Internet for free	19%	20%	17%
Use on-line databases to do research	16%	14%	20%
Use library computers and printers	14%	14%	13%
Participate in adult/children programs	11%	10%	12%
Get passes to local museums/events	7%	8%	5%
Use community conference rooms	3%	4%	1%

TABLE 2B  
LIBRARY UTILIZATION BY ADULT-ONLY USER AND CHILD  
USER HOUSEHOLDS

	All User HHs	Adult-Only User HHs	Child User HHs
<b>% ASKING LIBRARIAN FOR HELP</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>78%</b>
-- Help with reference materials/ research	87%	84%	91%
-- Help using equipment	29%	29%	29%
<b>% WANTING EXPANDED HOURS</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>29%</b>
-- Stay open later on weekdays	71%	64%	78%
-- More weekend hours	48%	54%	42%
-- Open earlier on weekdays	32%	36%	26%

TABLE 2C  
SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY BY ADULT-ONLY USER AND CHILD  
USER HOUSEHOLDS

	All User HHs	Adult-Only User HHs	Child User HHs
<b>SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY BRANCH</b>			
Very satisfied	71%	71%	70%
Satisfied	25%	23%	26%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2%	3%	1%
Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied	1%	1%	1%
Refused	2%	1%	2%
<b>SOURCE OF SATISFACTION (multiple responses)</b>			
Customer service from librarians	48%	50%	46%
Collection/services/materials available	34%	30%	39%
Facility/atmosphere	22%	26%	18%
Convenient/accessible/close to home	20%	18%	22%



# KEY IMPLICATIONS

- **Very high levels of “traditional” library use:** Users concentrate on borrowing hard-copy materials, use library as a place for quiet study and reading, ask librarian for help with collections and reference material more than help with technology.

This is especially true among households where children are library users: 93% of these householders consider materials borrowing as one of the most important reasons they use the library.

Convenient location – a sense of library as local resource – accounts for 18% - 20% of the reasons for high customer satisfaction.

- **Users do not come to the library for the “free Internet” as much as to use Internet-based services** (e.g., downloading materials, doing research, using on-line databases, using library equipment).
- **Households where children are library users are a major constituency.** These households are the most active users, are the most familiar with the library, the most frequent users, the most likely to ask a librarian for help, the most likely to ask for expanded hours. The demographic section above indicates these householders are disproportionately younger, more highly educated and more affluent.

**TABLE 3**  
**INTERNET USE AMONG LIBRARY USERS AND NON-USERS**

	<b>All M-D HH</b>	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Adult-Only User HHs</b>	<b>Child User HHs</b>	<b>Non-user HHs</b>
<b>% ACCESSING INTERNET</b>	78%	84%	79%	92%	69%
<b>WHERE DO THEY ACCESS INTERNET? (multiple responses)</b>					
Home	95%	94%	91%	97%	96%
Work	39%	41%	37%	46%	37%
Library	14%	21%	22%	20%	1%
Public Wi-Fi	13%	13%	9%	18%	12%
Other	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%

**TABLE 4A**  
**UTILIZATION OF LIBRARY WEBSITE AMONG LIBRARY USERS**

	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Adult-Only User HHs</b>	<b>Child User HHs</b>
<b>% EVER USING LIBRARY WEBSITE</b>	41%	38%	46%
Look up a book to see if it's available	90%	87%	94%
Renew a book	74%	76%	72%
Get info on branch location/hours	76%	69%	83%
Place a hold on a book	74%	70%	79%
Do research	60%	68%	52%
Search for event/program	48%	52%	44%
Download an e-book	43%	43%	42%
Search E-Government	38%	43%	32%
Download music or audio-books	35%	30%	40%

**TABLE 4B**  
**SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY WEBSITE AMONG LIBRARY**  
**USERS**

	All User HHs	Adult-Only User HHs	Child User HHs
<b>M-DPLS WEBSITE SATISFACTION</b>			
Very satisfied	55%	52%	58%
Satisfied	38%	41%	35%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5%	6%	3%
Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied	2%	2%	2%
Refused	1%	0%	2%

# KEY IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNET USE

- **Internet use is widespread among both households using the library system and households who do not.** Overall, 78% of households County-wide have Internet access, from 69% of the households which are not library users to fully 92% of the households in which one or more children are library users.
  - Virtually all of the persons who report accessing the Internet do so at their home, with another 40% doing so at work.
  - County-wide, library Wi-Fi is used by 14% of the households, with only about 20% - 21% of the library using households reporting use of the Internet at the public library.
- **The library website is used by only about 41% of the library users, more frequently by households where children are library users.** Note that the predominant use of the library website is to assist with “traditional” library functions, i.e. checking for the availability of a book (90%), getting information on branch locations and hours (76%), renewing a book or placing a book on hold (74%). The use of the library website as an information portal for other reasons is much less frequently mentioned.
- **Satisfaction with the library website is high**, with over 90% of the website users rating themselves as “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their web experiences.

# USER AND NON-USER ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- There are profound differences between the perceptions of adults in households where public libraries are used vs. households in which they are not. Given the statement that “public libraries are outmoded and obsolete,” 92% of the library-using households strongly disagree or disagree, vs. 67% of the adults in non-user households.
- Likewise, 94% of the adults in library-using households agree that “Public libraries add to my quality of life as a Miami-Dade citizen,” a position agreed to by only 69% of the adults in non-user households.
- The statement that “Miami-Dade Public Libraries provide an important service to persons without computers or Internet access at home,” however, shows no such distinction: 92% of the non-library-users agree or strongly agree with this statement, as do 97% of the adults in user households.

There are two important issues raised by these attitude data:

First, although there is a portion of the Miami-Dade community that does not use the public library system, **libraries are seen as a public benefit by the majority of users and non-users alike.** Even though the non-users have a lower opinion of libraries than users, fully 67% of the non-users do not think libraries are obsolete, 69% state that libraries add to their quality of life, and 92% feel that libraries perform an important function for persons in households where there is no computer or Internet access.

Secondly, the perception that libraries represent lifeline Internet services to a significant proportion of the Miami-Dade community is almost universal, even as there is little evidence for the actual utilization of Internet service as a lifeline benefit. The data show that at-home Internet is pervasive among Internet users, at-work and public Wi-Fi are widespread, and in the context of all the Internet-based activities that take place at the library, “free Internet” is not much of a factor. Yet, the role of the library in providing access to the Internet for persons without computers or an Internet account is a pervasive perception among library users and non-users alike.

**TABLE 5A**  
**ATTITUDES TOWARD LIBRARY**

	<b>All M-D HH</b>	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Non-user HHs</b>
<b>PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN GENERAL ARE OUTMODED, OBSOLETE AND NO LONGER NECESSARY AS A PUBLIC SERVICE</b>			
Agree	9%	6%	15%
Neutral	7%	2%	13%
Disagree	82%	92%	67%
Refused	2%	0%	5%

**TABLE 5B**  
**ATTITUDES TOWARD LIBRARY**

	<b>All M-D HH</b>	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Non-user HHs</b>
<b>M-D PUBLIC LIBRARIES PROVIDE IMPORTANT SERVICES TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE COMPUTERS OR INTERNET ACCESS</b>			
Agree	95%	97%	92%
Neutral	2%	1%	3%
Disagree	2%	1%	2%
Refused	2%	1%	4%
<b>PUBLIC LIBRARIES ADD TO MY QUALITY OF LIFE AS A CITIZEN OF M-D COUNTY</b>			
Agree	84%	94%	69%
Neutral	9%	4%	15%
Disagree	6%	2%	11%
Refused	2%	0%	5%



**TABLE 6**  
**FACTORS UNDERLYING THE CHOICE BETWEEN REDUCTION OF SERVICES AND INCREASED PROPERTY TAXES IN THE CONTEXT OF FUNDING SHORTFALLS FOR LIBRARIES**

	<b>All M-D HH</b>	<b>All User HHs</b>	<b>Non-user HHs</b>
<b>SEEN, READ OR HEARD ANYTHING IN THE NEWS ABOUT FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATIONS?</b>			
% Yes	36%	44%	22%
<b>FUNDING WILL BE INSUFFICIENT AT THE CURRENT PROPERTY TAX RATE. WHICH ACTION DO YOU SUPPORT?</b>			
Reduce branches, services, hours	36%	28%	49%
Increase library portion of property tax	45%	54%	31%
Don't know, undecided, can't say	19%	18%	21%

## STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS: AWARENESS OF LIBRARY FUNDING SHORTFALLS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

- As of the time the survey data were collected, in the Fall of 2013, awareness of problems in library funding was not widespread. Only 36% of Miami-Dade adults had seen, read or heard anything about problems with library funding – 44% of persons who were in library-using households, 22% of persons who were not.
- Accordingly, for 64% of the Miami-Dade County adult householders, the first information they received about funding shortfalls – and the first opportunity they had to think about their underlying choices – was when they were interviewed by BSR for this survey.
- Not surprisingly, roughly one out of five respondents could not choose between the “reduce services” and “increase taxes” options. This “undecided” segment accounted for about the same proportion of library users and library non-users in the sample.
  - Overall, 45% of adults in Miami-Dade households chose to raise property taxes. Not surprisingly, the level of support was higher among households with library users (54%) and lower among households with non-users (31%). Within the “user household” category, 61% of the households with children as users chose to increase taxes; 49% of the adult-only user households chose to increase taxes.
  - Overall, 36% of the Miami-Dade households chose to reduce library hours, close branches and cut services. Support for cutting libraries was stronger among non-user households (49%) and weaker among user households (28%).
  - “Undecided” represent about 19% of respondents overall, 18% among library user households and 21% among non-users.

# FACTORS AFFECTING CHOICE IN PUBLIC RESPONSE

Tables 7A – 7C, following, show three characteristics of survey respondents that are correlated with the choice of reduction in services vs. increase in property tax as a response to funding shortfalls.

- The higher the level of respondent education, the more likely he or she would choose to raise taxes rather than cut library services.
  - Among persons who chose to reduce services, the proportion with high school or less education was 30%, vs. 16% among the persons who chose to raise taxes. Conversely, among those who chose to reduce services, only 37% had college or postgraduate degrees, vs. 53% of the persons who chose to raise taxes.
- The more familiar the respondent was with the library, the more likely he or she would choose to raise taxes rather than cut library services.
  - Among those who chose to reduce services, 20% described themselves as “extremely familiar” with the public library system, vs. 35% of the persons who chose to raise taxes.
  - Conversely, among those who chose to reduce services, 30% were “not at all familiar” with the public library system, vs. only 17% of those who chose to raise taxes.
- Finally, the perception that public libraries are obsolete and outmoded was a much higher component of those who chose to cut library services than among those who chose to raise property taxes.
  - Among those who chose to reduce services, 21% felt that libraries were obsolete or outmoded (vs. 3% among those who chose to raise taxes).
  - Among those who chose to reduce services, 65% disagreed with the premise that public libraries were obsolete or outmoded, vs. 94% of the persons who chose to increase taxes.
- Table 7B, following, addresses the question of self-interest: do property owners choose differently in this question, when clearly they may well feel they are the only ones paying the extra taxes? In point of fact, if anything, persons who own their homes are slightly (but not significantly) more likely to be in the “raise taxes” category than the persons who are renters.

**TABLE 7A**  
**FACTORS DRIVING DECISIONS ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES TO**  
**SUPPORT LIBRARY SERVICES**

	<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>		
	<b>High School or less</b>	<b>Some college/AA</b>	<b>College/ post-grad</b>
<b>FUNDING WILL BE INSUFFICIENT AT THE CURRENT PROPERTY TAX RATE. WHICH ACTION DO YOU SUPPORT?</b>			
Reduce branches, hours, services	45%	37%	30%
Raise property taxes	29%	45%	54%
Undecided, can't say	26%	17%	16%

**TABLE 7B**  
**FACTORS DRIVING DECISIONS ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES TO**  
**SUPPORT LIBRARY SERVICES**

	<b>FAMILIARITY WITH LIBRARY</b>			
	<b>Extremely familiar</b>	<b>Familiar</b>	<b>Slightly familiar</b>	<b>Not at all familiar</b>
<b>FUNDING WILL BE INSUFFICIENT AT THE CURRENT PROPERTY TAX RATE. WHICH ACTION DO YOU SUPPORT?</b>				
Reduce branches, hours, services	26%	36%	39%	43%
Raise property taxes	58%	47%	43%	30%
Undecided, can't say	16%	17%	18%	27%

**TABLE 7C**  
**FACTORS DRIVING DECISIONS ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES TO**  
**SUPPORT LIBRARY SERVICES**

	<b>Public libraries in general are outmoded, obsolete and no longer necessary as a public service.</b>		
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>FUNDING WILL BE INSUFFICIENT AT THE CURRENT PROPERTY TAX RATE. WHICH ACTION DO YOU SUPPORT?</b>			
Reduce branches, hours, services	81%	62%	29%
Raise property taxes	11%	21%	52%
Undecided, can't say	8%	17%	20%

**TABLE 7D**  
**FACTORS DRIVING DECISIONS ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES TO**  
**SUPPORT LIBRARY SERVICES**

	<b>OWN VS. RENT YOUR HOME</b>	
	<b>Own</b>	<b>Rent</b>
<b>FUNDING WILL BE INSUFFICIENT AT THE CURRENT PROPERTY TAX RATE. WHICH ACTION DO YOU SUPPORT?</b>		
Reduce branches, hours, services	34%	42%
Raise property taxes	48%	34%
Undecided, can't say	18%	25%